AN EXPLORATION OF THE CHARACTER, EXPRESSIVE QUALITIES AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS ARTS ACTIVITIES OF EXCEPTIONAL ADOLESCENT STUDENTS

PAMELA A. STURGESS

This research project was funded under contract
by the Ministry of Education, Ontario.
It reflects the views of the author and not
necessarily those of the Ministry.

The Honourable Sean Conway, Minister
Bernard J. Shapiro, Deputy Minister

Ontario

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the character, expressive qualities, and attitudes towards Arts activities of exceptional Canadian students. The information was derived from the adolescents themselves.

An audio/visual questionnaire was designed to address many aspects of the Visual and Performing Arts. It was administered to students representing all parts of the province, and many different exceptionalities.

Responses to the questions clearly show many areas of concern. Recommendations focus on the need for Arts training for teachers of exceptional students; particular attention should be given to Arts education for the hearing handicapped and adolescents in correctional centres. Responses from visually impaired students correspond with the fact that, from an early age, a strong emphasis is placed on education though the Arts from the primary years.

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Pam Sturgess
Georgetown, February 1986.

1.0 The Purpose of This Study

1.1 The purpose of this research project was to explore the character, expressive qualities, and attitudes of exceptional adolescent students towards Arts activities from the point of view of the adolescents themselves. The investigation examined students' attitudes towards Arts activities both intramurally and extramurally. The expectation was that this sample study would reflect the attitudes of the exceptional-student population at large. In this study, the categories of exceptional students included those with behavioural, communications, or physical handicaps, and students who were identified as being intellectually exceptional. It was felt that students who are assessed as being trainable retarded should be considered in a special study, at a different time.

Similarly, as a matter of clarification, the Arts were defined as being the Visual Arts, Crafts, Music, Dance, and Drama.

1.3 This descriptive research study attempts to ascertain how the current teaching of the Arts meets the needs and the expectations of the students themselves.

There are implications in this project for both teacher education and curriculum design. Data for this study were obtained by recording individual interviews with a selection of exceptional students, and from an extensive literature search.

1.4 An audio/visual questionnaire was designed to meet the needs of different types of exceptional students. Verbal responses were the preferred mode of documenting the information because of the nature and range of the various learning disabilities. Special arrangements were made for visually and hearing-impaired adolescents.

Students were also selected because they represented different cultural and residential (geographic) categories. These included Anglophone, Francophone, and ethnic populations who reside in urban, rural, and suburban areas.

2.0 The Nature of the Problem

2.1 No other study could be found which examined exceptional Canadian adolescent students' attitudes towards Arts activities. This study follows two previous research projects, The Visual and Performing Arts and Exceptional Students: A Study of Exemplary Programs and its companion Worlds Made of Symbols: Teaching Ideas in the Visual and Performing Arts for Exceptional Students.

2.2 The former project employed the use of a sample survey in order to obtain information concerning teachers who had been identified by their school boards as providing exemplary teaching programs for exceptional students. To some degree, similar questions were asked

of the students in this study, although the presentation and format of the questions were different. The results of the earlier study clearly showed that teachers perceive the need for education through the Arts for exceptional students.

2.3 The questionnaire attempted to ascertain in general terms answers to the following questions:

1) Does the content of current Arts programs meet the needs of exceptional students?
2) Does the perceived subject matter have value for the individual in that Arts activities provide avenues by which students are able to construct and understand their own realities?

3.0 Objectives

3.1 The study addresses these questions from a three different points of view:

(a) the students themselves;
(b) an examination of audio/visual questionnaires in any other disciplines - related to the Arts, or otherwise;
(c) a search of the (related) literature.

4.0 The Schedule

The following timeline was proposed:

March - Oct. 1985	- Search the literature for similar studies.
	- Develop an audio/visual questionnaire.
Nov. - Dec. 1985	- Record the narration.
	- Assemble the Visual, Auditory, and Tactile Materials to be used in conjunction with the questionnaire.
	- Edit the narration.
	- Pretest the audio/visual questionnaire.
	- Assess the results.
Dec. - Jan. 1985/6	- Administer questionnaire.
	- Transcribe the tapes.
Feb. 1986	- Compile and submit report to the Ministry of Education.

5.0 A Review of the Literature

5.1 The literature search included:

(a) general background theory which was applicable to the Arts, but did not address the exceptional student specifically;

(b) publications which focused on the Arts and exceptional students;

(c) journal documents which related to the Arts and exceptional students;

(d) "Datrix", to locate relevant dissertations listed in Dissertation Abstracts;

(e) school board documents and privately circulated articles and booklets.

5.2 Some 500 documents were searched. It was found that:

(a) literature exists which deals with questioning students about their attitudes towards the Visual Arts.

(b) documented information which concerns the use of audio/visual questioning techniques is available.

5.3 There is scant literature which deals with questioning attitudes towards the Arts generally. However, there is a variety of documentation which examines attitudes towards the Visual Arts. This material addresses various populations, ranging from adults to four-year-olds. Representative of this literature are the following studies and reports each of which influenced the format and content of the questionnaire.

5.4.1 In Artists' Ideas About Art and Their Use in Education a report written for the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, John A. Michael surveyed the concepts of professional artists with the intention of applying the resultant information to Art instruction in secondary schools. Writings of artists, critics, and art historians were reviewed, and, from this data, a questionnaire was developed.

The questionnaire dealt with such topics as: the artist's educational background and influences acquired while at school; the purposes, concerns, and influences on art production; preplanning and spontaneous development of art work; and partial versus whole methods of working.

5.4.2 "Art Activities for Evaluating Visual Memory" is a journal article in which an Art therapist (Shaun A. McNiff) discusses how spontaneous art productions can be used to "remediate difficulties in visual perception", and the strong emphasis that has been placed on:

> discussion techniques simply because so little is known about how language can further our appreciation of art, while at the same time providing a tool for the development of visual perception.

In order to examine this area closely, and apply the findings to remedial situations, spontaneous Art activities were devised - the author referred to them as "memory game" drawings. These drawing games emphasized the organization of space, thoughts, and language and were directed towards helping students who experience learning difficulties.

5.4.3 "Discovering and Motivating Artistically Gifted L.D. Students" (Camille Vautour) contains a twofold message with important implications. The first aims of this project were:

(a) to devise a means of identifying artistically talented students in a program for junior, learning-disabled children; and

(b) to develop teaching strategies to enhance education through Art.

In the first place, the author points out that one does not usually think in terms of a "gifted-retarded child" or a "gifted learning-disabled child", yet Havighurst has stated that:

> The talented or gifted child is one who shows consistently remarkable performance in any worthwhile line of endeavour. Thus, we shall include not only the intellectually gifted but also those who show promise in music, the graphic arts, creative writing, dramatics, mechanical skills, and social leadership. (p. 19)
>
> R. Havighurst
> Education for the Gifted

A checklist was developed by teaching staff, representing both the Art and Learning Disabilities departments, to try to determine which children might be included in the talented or gifted categories. The writer comments:

> It is apparent that it is possible for a child to suffer from a specific disability which hinders his academic progress, while at the same time, displaying exceptional ability in an area such as music or art.

The checklist asked the following questions:

Does a child

1) enjoy Art activities?
2) attempt tasks eagerly?
3) show originality?
4) innovate, affect the work of the other students?
5) use various media?
6) persevere?
7) receive recognition from peers and adults?
8) take pride in his work?
9) pursue Art during free time?
10) make self-critical judgements?

The second part of the paper was devoted to an explanation of the means by which teaching enhanced the learning-disabled child's ability to learn through Art. Under the supervision of the learning-disabilities consultant, specific booklets were devised by the regular classroom teacher, tailored to suit the individual needs and interests of each "artistically talented" child.

> Each of the booklets consisted of simplified stories or instructions directly related to units of study being conducted in the regular classrooms. These booklets contained blank pages with one or two sentences written in at the bottom.

Three specific examples were cited:

(a) Billy's booklet was called Old Ironsides and dealt with early American history.
(b) Matt's book was concerned with energy sources.
(c) Lisa's book examined desert life.

What is interesting in this experiment is the fact that the booklets were developed in such a way that the child could choose to draw, paint, or sculpt (in fact, use a variety of different media with which to illustrate and interpret concepts suggested in the book). When completed, these booklets were shared - as study guides - with others in the regular class.

Because the artists/authors all experienced difficulties in reading, each child was provided with his/her own audio-dictionary.

> The cards used in these audio-dictionaries were special blanks with a strip of magnetic recording tape on each. The strip of tape allowed words to be recorded through the use of a special card-playing machine. The remainder of the card provided space for the child to write the word that had been recorded on the tape strip. With the use of the card-playing machine and the box of cards, a child could both see a word and hear its correct pronunciation. (p.95).

5.4.4 The use of a machine which allows a child to both see a word and hear it spoken, suggests the work of a researcher whose main interest lies in the area of artificial intelligence and cognitive-thought processes as revealed through music. Jeanne Bamberger (1975), in her paper entitled "What's in a Tune?", discusses the fact that the act of interpreting and understanding even a simple tune is an intellectual activity which requires that individuals reconstruct the music's features and relationships. The perception of music, as with the perception of visual or literary art forms, is an active process which involves selecting, classifying, grouping, and interrelating features to which the individual is attending at one particular time.

Bamberger's main objectives are to try to determine how an individual represents a tune to himself or herself, what features are immediately most obvious, and what strategies and decisions are employed by an individual during the course of building a tune.

The answers to these questions were sought by observing the step-by-step progress of non-musical college students. Under laboratory conditions, students were encouraged to analyse their own thought structures and processes. The means by which this information was elicited is interesting:

> The gadgetry with which the student works is quite simple: He finds himself before a typewriter which is coupled on one side with a computer and on the other side with a "music-box" about the size and shape of a lunch pail. This box is capable of producing a five-octave range of pitches, playing four parts simultaneously and making two percussion sounds, one similar to a tom tom, the other to a brushed cymbal. The student can summon sounds by typing on the computer keyboard; his main responsibility is to think about his inventions and re-order the results, having listened to the effect. To capture the experience of a student in this...project, put yourself in his place... type, simply GI. Instantly the.... music box performs...a brief, three-note motif. (p.5).

The author calls these motifs "tune blocks", and suggests that one think of them as various kinds of building blocks - whose shape depends on particular configurations of pitch and time.

Students were told that there were no right or wrong answers to the problem, and that the tune blocks could be played as often as possible and in any arrangement or pattern.

The results can be summarized as follows:

(a) No two students ever invented the same whole tune.

(b) While the arrangement of the blocks was the only variable, students' discoveries of the significance of the context was of paramount importance. They discovered that meanings altered with positional changes.

(c) Individual blocks were perceived with new significances.

(d) Observations of these processes gave glimmers of insight into what constitutes learning in this context. It also caused a reassessment of the observers' tools of analysis.

(e) Limits were imposed by the mandatory use of five "tune blocks"; however, rather than imposing constraints on the students, this factor had the opposite effect and resulted in creative musical compositions.

(f) The more practice that was involved, the more acute became the students' perception of style, and this learning was transferred to other musical experiences.

5.4.5 In contrast to the open-ended research discussed previously, **"Nonhandicapped Students' Perceptions of Severely Handicapped Students"** (Stainback and Stainback 1982) involved a different kind of questioning. This project did not involve Arts activities but was designed to be used by both handicapped and nonhandicapped students (contrary to what the title suggests). The aim was to assess attitudes and feelings between the handicapped and the nonhandicapped. The inventory consisted of 106 orally presented questions. The students were asked to respond either "yes" or "no" to each of the questions.

5.4.6 Attitudes of Nonhandicapped Elementary School Students Toward School-Aged Trainable Mentally Retarded Students (Sandberg 1982) appears to serve a similar purpose.

The intention was to determine attitudinal reactions towards TMR students. This instrument consisted of two parts. The first part was made up of "literary vignettes" which attempted to describe a variety of behaviours that might be found in TMR children. Each vignette was accompanied by a multiple-choice answer sheet.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of a series of 12 slides depicting individual children.

> Eight of the slides were of TMR children who were not enrolled in the same (school) district. The visual presentations of the TMR students included some children with obvious Down's syndrome.

Part II of the questionnaire attempted to answer the question, "Does the way a TMR child looks affect the attitudes of regular...grade students towards him/her?"

5.4.7 A Study of Aspects of Art Education for Four-Year-Old Children: The Nature of Some Relationships Between Their Work in Selected Art Materials and Their Verbalization Concerning the Selected Work of Others (Arnold 1963) is a thesis which does not focus on the exceptional child, but does employ a multimedia approach to the stated investigation.

5.4.8 **"What do High School Students Value? An Update"** (Bazemore 1984). This project does not deal with the Arts or exceptionalities. However, it does address the values and concerns of both adolescents and teachers in the same high school. Neither the teachers nor the students were given any kind of guidelines. The respondents were simply asked to list "spontaneously and anonymously" (p.99) the 20 things that they most like to do - and identify the five most important activities. A report five years earlier had asked students and teachers the same question. The results showed that the teachers' rankings had not changed radically. Five years later, student and teacher interests still appear to be entirely diverse; however, there was evidence of "more movement - both positive and negative" in the students' rankings.

5.4.9 "The Visual Arts Program for Enhancement of Body Image" (De Chiara 1982). The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not a Visual Arts program that focused on the human figure would enhance the body image of children with severe handicaps. This study is unique in that it employed a multimedia approach to confirm the hypothesis. However, it is not unique in its concept. There are several "body image" programs, for example:

(a) Development of the Body Scheme in Children. J.S. Ayres

(b) Psychological Evaluation of Children's Human Figure Drawings. E.A. Koppitz

(c) Body Image and Body Awareness. B.G. Petitclerc

Some body-image programs do address the handicapped child, for example:

(a) Body-Image of Blind Children. B.S. Cratty and B.A. Sams

(b) The Concept of Body Image and the Remediation of Body Image Disorders. G.E. Blom, G.K. Farley, and C.M. Guthals

While there are many very good theories as to why well-formed body-image concepts are crucial to cognitive development, it would appear that there are also problems with these experiments. First, a review of the major programs shows that Art experiences are used minimally to determine the claimed results. Secondly, and more importantly in the context of this study, the personal expression of ideas, feelings, and attitudes appeared to be of little consequence to the researchers.

5.4.10 A very comprehensive questionnaire that was developed to examine adolescents' attitudes towards the Visual Arts and their instruction was compiled by W. Lambert Brittain in 1968. It should be pointed out that this did not address the exceptional learner and it did not address the Performing Arts. In spite of this, it has proved to be, for the purposes of this research, an invaluable source document.

5.4.11 Project Zero is a very extensive research organization, funded in part by the Spencer Foundation, the National Institute of Education, and Harvard University. It has produced some outstanding work examining the understanding of the Arts and Human Development. These results have been published in the form of many research papers. Important in the context of this particular project is "Children's Conceptions of the Arts", by Howard Gardner, Ellen Winner, and Mary Kircher. This research examines children's conceptions - and misconceptions - about the Arts. As the authors point out, "What children know and do not know about the Arts is a much neglected problem in the psychology and pedagogy of the Arts" (p.60). They further state that there appear to be only two research traditions which address these issues. One of these traditions centres around the work of Piaget, Kohlberg, and their associates. This research examines children's conceptions in related topics, such as "moral judgment, physical causality, and theories about thought" (p.61). The second tradition - favoured by these researchers - employs

a clinical method of inquiry. These investigations have focused on the stages of child development. The authors' reasons for paying attention to children's thoughts about the artistic process should be noted:

> (a) It is most probable that the young person's participation in the aesthetic world will be as audience member, perceiver, or critic; and appreciation of all art, and especially forms of modern art, such as electronic music or abstract painting, demands understanding....If a child does not know that music is different from noise, that a painting of a horse is not the same as the photograph of one, and is not necessarily superior to an abstract work, ... he or she can hardly be expected to respond in a meaningful way....
>
> (b) The second reason is pragmatic: Considerable effort and money is expended as school systems bus students to museums, (etc.) .... It is not known, however, whether most children are bored, superficially entertained, or deeply affected by... "cultural" exposures (ibid).

Gardner, Winner, and Kircher's methodology involved interviews with 121 children whose ages ranged from 4 to 16 years. The interviews were conducted by trained researchers using open-ended questions. This was the preferred method over what was termed as a "closed series questionnaire" (p.63). It was stressed that all responses were considered to be of interest and that there were no "right" or "wrong" answers. "Responses were tape-recorded for subsequent analysis after permission had been obtained from the subject." This procedure was "accepted readily" by all of the respondents. Although the research states that examples from all Art forms were used in the interviews, and that "many Art works were displayed", it is unfortunate that the research does not discuss specifics, and the content is left largely to the reader's imagination.

5.4.12 Imagination is listed as a high priority among the attributes for artistic giftedness. Brent and Marjorie Wilson of the Pennsylvania State University (1981), have worked for nine years on the development of instruments to determine the identification of artistic giftedness among children and young adolescents. By giving these instruments "surgical precision", the authors attempt to pinpoint specific cognitive orientations towards artistic activity.

Part one of this research takes the form of a literary questionnaire which seeks to identify the individual's attitudes and the individual's belief systems. The latter, according to the Wilsons, comprises:

(a) self
(b) general beliefs
(c) goals
(d) values

The cognitive-orientation instrument is supplemented by Part B, which contains several graphic production exercises to assess "skills, fluency, and imagination". It should be noted that these exercises all suggest drawing as the primary mode of communication.

An example of one of these exercises (together with a large space for implementing it) follows:
The artist Leonardo da Vinci wrote:

> If you wish to make an animal imagined by you appear natural - let us say a dragon - take the eyes of a cat, the ears of a porcupine, the nose of a greyhound, the brow of a lion, the temples of an old rooster, and the neck of a water tortoise....

"Draw your own imaginary animal by combining lots and lots of parts from many different animals. Make your imaginary animal just as detailed as you can."

Wilson and Wilson, also in
Teaching Children to Draw

5.4.13 The last publication to be reviewed does not address the question of the exceptional child per se, nor does it illumine a particular type of questionnaire. It does highlight, however, an aspect of Arts education seldom made manifest.

This paper, "The Fiedel School: An Alternative Approach to Learning through the Arts" (Silverblank 1978), suggests that the real test of an educational experience cannot be determined immediately; rather, a retrospective evaluation is necessary. The author quotes Seneca's words when he states, "Time discovers truth." The writer displays caution when he points out that "journals are filled with reports of new, exciting, and innovative (programs in) schools." All too often, he continues, "these new approaches...do not stand the test of time" (p.316). "The real test of an educative experience...takes fifteen or twenty years to see the results. In short, to look forward, one must first look backward" (p.317).

Accordingly, the first group of alumni from the Fiedel School were approached and asked to share their perception of the school that had served to educate them through the medium of the Arts. Fifteen graduates were contacted and 13 replied. All of the alumni who responded were involved in activities that were "exciting, creative, and in all cases personally satisfying" (Ibid.). The letters which the graduates wrote speak for themselves.

...I feel that the person that I have evolved to be is greatly a product of the care, love, sensitivity, and creativity of the Fiedels. I was a student at the Fiedel School during the adolescent years of 12 to 17. It is an age when most young people are in conflict with themselves and their families. For me, adolescence was a difficult time, in which I felt incapable, useless, ugly, and basically negative about myself. I feel that my family was one in which my self-doubts were aggravated, and in a sense, fertilized. However, my relationship with the Fiedels developed into one of nurturing and trust. I feel that adolescence is a truly critical time in one's development, and I feel that much of my positive self-feeling comes from the spirit of courage, creativity, and resourcefulness that the Fiedels instilled in me.

(requested that name be withheld)

...It was a time when I could express myself in movement, music, acting, and visually, and be listened to and taken seriously. I felt I had something to say that was valuable. I was often given various responsibilities in the running of the school and in the productions of plays, and I was challenged in ways that suddenly awakened in me the ability that I had for leadership.

...The friends that I developed at the school made a great impact on me. The intensity, work-orientation, and deep sharing that took place in these many relationships, have set a precedent in the quality of the relationships that I seek out in my adult life.

(Wendy Aibel-Weiss)

6.0 Theoretical Framework

6.1 Education through the Arts is characterized by the fact that it "must have value for the individual, independent of any subsequent event, experience, or idea to which it might lead" (Arnstine in Smith 1970).

Most educators would agree that education is synonymous with learning. Learning, like imagination, is an active process which involves discovering meaningful relationships among the often fragmented and confused views of life that young people have.

Learning, like imagination, requires students to classify, interpret, order, and reorder experiences into coherent wholes. Learning begins when "inner" mind engages with "outer" structures of knowledge. However, it also should not be overlooked that "in life as in art, common reality is far less common than common sense tends to assume" (Kreitler & Kreitler 1972). Cézanne felt frustrated that his art was not able fully to "make visible how the world touches us" (Merleau-Ponty 1964). For Ben Shahn (1957) painting incorporated "the wholeness of thinking and feeling within an individual; ...Imagination's role, according to Dewey, involved a "large and generous blending of interests at the point where the mind comes into contact with the world."

6.2 Imagination has implications for educational theory. Imagination has been linked, quite rightly, with the term "adventure". Coleridge states his interpretation as follows:

> Imagination reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities; of sameness with difference; the idea with image; the individual with representative;...
>
> [Effective teaching is no longer considered to be merely a matter of training children in a variety of skills;...but it is concerned with the intentional process of getting them to think for themselves."]
>
> (Greene in Smith 1970).

Education through the Arts supports these statements wholeheartedly. Nowhere, however, should it be made more manifest than in the teaching of students with special needs. Children with special needs require special teachers, ones who allow children the full range of their imaginations.

According to Stevens (1965),

> imagination is a constructive activity of mind which aligns itself with the discovery of resemblances, symbol making, (and) synthesis.... The imaginative creation of ever-widening patterns of wholeness does not, it appears, diminish or distort "reality", even if it is the case that the activity of imagination serves to reinvent the world.

6.3 Few fail to recognize the importance of the role that imagination plays in education, and in Education through the Arts in particular; however, there is another side to this matter.

The acquisition of the languages of the Arts - (their symbol systems) appears to be little in dispute in early childhood education. As children progress through the primary levels, the use of the languages of the Arts is slowly lost. Robert Witkin stated in his keynote address to the Canadian Society for Education through Art (1985):

> We shut (the languages of the Arts) down bit by bit, and we open up rational, analytical discourse. As we open up rational, analytical discourse, we hope that at least by the second or third year in the secondary school, if the child still has a "bee in his bonnet" about art, we hope that he's got it out by the time he's in the third year of secondary school.

Witkin points out that

> Schools see themselves, above all, as being about the development of objective discourse; rational, scientific modes of discourse, ... Why? For one simple reason; our mastery of those languages which we call the languages of

> science...is the reason for our society's capacity to effect the greatest exploitation of materials and natural resources that the world has ever known.
>
> (Montreal, October 1985)

6.4 Langer (1967) speaks of works of Art as "constructed symbols, made in the mode of imagination". Dewey describes them as "a way of seeing and feeling things as they compose an integral whole". Symbol-making is far from being the sole domain of artists. Robert Witkin, in his book **The Intelligence of Feeling**, discusses the organization of symbols in terms of "wholes". He suggests that there is a preadolescent phase in which "symbol and object world are still tied to one another" (p. 177) and that there is an adolescent (and postadolescent) phase in which "symbol is progressively freed from object and becomes independently organized...." The four operations are categorized as follows:

Preadolescent Phase:

(a) Contrasts
(b) Semblances
(c) Harmonies
(d) Discords

(Post) Adolescent Operations:

(a) Polarities
(b) Identities
(c) Syntheses
(d) Dialectics

Witkin points out that he has identified these operations in a tentative way and in the hope that these may "spark off ideas in the minds of teachers for ordering curriculum objectives in the creative arts in relation to personal development" (p.180). Witkin's theory has been put to the test several times. It was hypothesized that teachers who taught some aspect of the Arts would reflect the higher of these two levels of thinking. It was also presumed that teachers whose thinking reflected the pre-adolescent mode of operations could not - or rather would not be able to - teach students to rise above this level. This may not necessarily have been the case, but there was a high-probability factor involved.

An instrument was developed which attempted to identify teachers' modes of symbolic operations. It was administered on three separate occasions. The survey indicated that very few teachers teach to the level of their students' potential for learning through the Arts.

6.5 It should also be noted that recurring themes emerged during the course of the study examining the **Visual and Performing Arts and Exceptional Students: A Study of Exemplary Programs** (1986). These themes fall into four general categories:

(a) Things Past
(b) The Here and Now
(c) The Future
(d) Fantasy

It is apparent that some exceptional students could never deal with some of these categories. However, it was also observed that many handicapped children manage to bridge these boundaries with ease. There is a danger that teachers might easily underestimate exceptional children's ability to perform tasks before really exploring the limits of their students' potential. Students' performances must be linked in some ways to the teachers' thinking. If this is not flexible, it could prove to be detrimental to the child.

6.6 Future considerations, whether or not they constitute part of an Arts program, are a concern of most adolescents. George Orwell, referring to 1984, said, "I do not believe that the kind of society I describe necessarily will arrive, but I believe...that something resembling it could...." The Arts can and should be used for representing the future; Kreitler and Kreitler state that:

> Depiction of desired and feared events, description of improbable eventualities, and the presentation of a variety of possible conceptions,...regardless of how the future is apprehended and presented, the experiencing of the future in the framework of art strengthens the representation of the future as a major force in...the present and for the sake of the present.
> (the emphasis is mine)

6.7 June King McFee (1966) also expresses a concern for the present. She emphasizes the importance attached to the role an industrialized multiethnic society plays in the lives of children. Important considerations for Arts educators in this context can be succinctly summarized. McFee advocates that all students should respect and understand the function of the Arts as a cultural force and as a transmitter of values, attitudes, and meanings. Further, she suggests that students be shown how to recognize the importance of aesthetic judgement in urban and rural development, and that they learn how to "discriminate and evaluate the symbolic communication of mass media". Integral to these decision-making processes is the key factor, namely, that these functions are only truly valued if the student preserves independent judgement. (My emphasis).

6.8 A summary of the considerations which are integral to Arts education and the literature search include:

(a) methods of working, i.e., part versus whole;
(b) verbalization of art processes;
(c) the use of drawing as a medium for expressing cognitive processes;
(d) the use of various media as an expression of self;

(e) the effect of recognition of work in the Arts by peers and adults;
(f) the part the Arts play in free time and out-of-school activities;
(g) the ability to discriminate and make critical judgements;
(h) the use of electronic aids to learn about students' thought processes;
(i) the use of "literary vignettes" to determine students' attitudes;
(j) values and the adolescent;
(k) the effects of open-ended questions on students' responses;
(l) the student as audience, historian, and art critic;
(m) the effect of extracurricular school trips on students;
(n) the effect of there generally being no "right" or "wrong" answers in Arts education.

6.9 A summary of the considerations which are entrenched in the theoretical framework include:
Do the Arts activities:

(a) have true value for the individual?
(b) provide opportunities for imaginative interpretations?
(c) include the element of "adventure"?

Are the Arts seen by adolescents as being:

(a) important in students' lives?
(b) important to parents?
(c) important in the school system?
(d) important environmentally?
(e) important as reflections of things past and things future?
(f) important as a cultural force with multiethnic considerations?
(g) important as a factor in urban and rural development?
(h) important as a means by which the messages of the mass media are evaluated?

7.0 Methodology

7.1 The project's success was dependent largely on the method chosen to present the material. Critical to this study was the audio/visual questionnaire. It was anticipated that many exceptional adolescents would feel more comfortable listening to questions rather than reading them. It was also judged necessary to structure the questions in such a way that they invited open-ended, oral responses. However, students had the option of simultaneously reading the questions on slides while listening to the audio-tape.

7.2 No questions which demanded "right" or "wrong" answers were used in the questionnaire. The questions were worded in such a way that students had the maximum freedom in which to express their opinions about Arts activities.

Concern over a number of important factors provided the basic structure for the questionnaire; it should be noted that the major emphasis was directed towards a greater understanding of how specific issues were perceived by the students themselves.

The instrument was designed to explore four major areas, namely, how the exceptional adolescent perceives:

- the purpose of education through the Arts;
- individual decision-making strategies;
- the role of language in the development of self-criticism and critical thinking;
- his or her own reality through Arts Education.

7.3 First, it was planned to put the audio/visual questionnaire on video-tape. Because the questions addressed the Performing Arts, movement and live performance would enhance the presentation. However, this concept was found to be impractical for two reasons. First, using excerpts from motion pictures would have violated copyright laws, and secondly, the cost of using short "cuts" from a film production company was prohibitive at 10 dollars a second.

7.4 Initially, an attempt was made to arrange the slides thematically, and then an attempt was made to match the content of the questions with appropriate photography. Both the complexity of the questions and the sometimes abstract quality of the ideas made this infeasible.

At this point, revisions were made to the questions which dealt with the Performing Arts. This entailed a somewhat indirect questioning technique. Questions which had a tactile participatory quality were included in this version of the questionnaire, but these were later discarded for logistical reasons.

7.5 Up until this point, as the audio/visual questionnaire was designed, it did not contain the written word. However, there were some intrinsic advantages for the student, if a printed form of the questions was superimposed on interesting visuals, and if simultaneously the student heard the spoken words. A method was found to superimpose words on colour slides: (1) typewritten text was photocopied onto acetate sheets; (2) slides were projected against a screen, over which the acetate sheets were taped; (3) fast film was used to take colour photos of the combined projected image and superimposed text.

7.6 Two narrators - one male and one female - were used to read individual questions and parts of questions. This was a particularly critical factor for the blind students, but one that also proved to be very helpful for most of the other students. Two meetings between the principal investigator and narrators involved discussion, rehearsal, and editing of the questionnaire. This was time well spent, because it cut down on the sound studio costs.

7.7 Music was needed to serve different functions. First, it was to act as an introduction and conclusion to the questionnaire. Second, it was to be used as "bridges" between questions. Third, selections were needed as examples for discovering preferences and detecting differences in musical style.

Again, the problem of copyright material was a major factor. A music company - like the film production company that sold the rights for use of film excerpts - was contacted. The noncommercial rate for using 30 seconds of music is $8.50 (1986). Costs in this case were not nearly on the scale for using film material, but the range of selections was fairly limited because of adolescents' tastes. Finally, the decision was made to use some contemporary "up-beat" music, generally in demand for commercial work, for the introduction, conclusion, the "bridges", and the two pieces representing stylistic differences. Music from around the world, played on different instruments, was used for the question about preferences. In order to offset limits imposed by the lack of particular sound materials, students were invited to suggest their own preferences, if the selections were not to their liking. At this point the sound track was ready for the splicing of narration and music.

7.8 Visual materials were chosen to perform different functions. First, an attempt was made to provide visual interest and variety for the printed form of the questionnaire. This was not as simple as it might seem, because the text, in order to be clearly legible, required a great deal of light-coloured space on the slides. Second, works of art were chosen which covered a wide variety of art and architectural styles. These included slides of the Parthenon, paintings by Jan van Eyck, Breughel, and Leger, and self-portraits by Rembrandt, Delacroix, and Van Gogh. Contemporary artists were represented by Brian Porter, Victor Brauner, Norval Morriseau, and Carl Schaeffer.

7.9 The sound track and visuals were now ready for use. It was decided to pretest the questionnaire using a slide projector and tape recorder and not to combine the two on video-tape.

Although the audio-tape was only 15 minutes and 44 seconds long, time had to be allowed for the students' responses.

7.10 The pretest was conducted and, as a result, the questionnaire was shortened because of students' time constraints. Extraneous visuals and all questions which required "hands-on" tactile materials were eliminated.

The streamlined version of the instrument could be administered in 40 minutes or less, which was more in line with the maximum time-period available to most students. It was also more in line with slower students' attention spans.

Finally, the music, which introduced and concluded the questionnaire, was also omitted because it added little to the overall efficiency of the administration of the questionnaire.

7.11 The instrument was then administered to 30 exceptional students from different parts of the Province of Ontario.

7.12 English Questionnaire:

AN EXPLORATION OF THE CHARACTER,
EXPRESSIVE QUALITIES AND ATTITUDES
OF EXCEPTIONAL ADOLESCENT STUDENTS
TOWARDS ARTS ACTIVITIES

(An Audio/Visual Questionnaire)

1. Which Arts activities do you enjoy?

2. Do you feel good about participating in dance, drama, music, and visual-arts activities?

3. Do you like an Arts activity if...

   (a) the results are what you expect?

   (b) an adult might have done something similar?

   (c) the Arts teacher thinks what you did was great?

   (d) the other students think that what you did was great?

4. Which of these appeals to you?

   (a) Arts activities where I can tell what's going on;

   (b) Arts activities that show you how people feel and think about things;

   (c) Arts activities that have sound and movement.

5. Which do you prefer?

   (a) working by myself on an individual project;

   (b) working with a few friends on the same project;

   (c) Arts lessons when everyone in the class is given the same assignment.

6. Do you like

   (a) being given ideas about what to do in Arts activities?

   (b) thinking up your own ideas?

7. Do you know how well you have performed on an Arts project? or,

   Do you like to be told what kind of standards are going to be used to judge your work?

8. How do you feel about the results of your Arts activities being displayed or performed for others?

9. When you have free time in school, which of the following do you prefer to do?

   (a) draw or paint
   (b) play a musical instrument
   (c) listen to music

(d) write a play or film script
(e) dance
(f) none of these

10. Are you involved in your own Arts activities outside school? If so, describe them.

11. Have you recently visited an Arts centre during scheduled school time?

    (a) did you listen to music played professionally?
    (b) attend a theatre production?
    (c) or visit an art gallery?

12. How do artists help to make the world a better place to live in?

13. Which television personality do you admire and why? What are his or her most outstanding characteristics?

14. What kind of dramatic situations appeal to you? If you could participate in one, as one of the characters, which role would you choose to play and why?

15. What makes you angry? If you had the chance to present a point of view in which you were given the opportunity to get people to change their minds about something, how would you do it?

16. What do you think your parents would choose for you to learn in the Arts? What do you think your friends would like to explore through the Arts?

17. What do your parents think of the Art that you make at school?

18. Which do you like to do best?

    (a) learn how to use various types of materials and tools correctly;

    (b) or be allowed to use the art materials in your own way.

19. When you make something in Art,

    (a) do you "see it" before you begin? or,

    (b) do you begin to work, and let the idea develop as you go along?

20. With which statement do you agree?

    (a) I don't know what to listen to but I could play it if I knew.

    (b) I know what I like to listen to but I don't know how to play it.

    (c) I know what I like to listen to and I know how to play it.

21. Which statement describes how you feel?

    (a) I know what I like to dramatize and I know how to portray it.

    (b) I know what I like to dramatize but I don't know how to act.

    (c) I don't know what to dramatize but I could portray an idea if I knew how to do it.

22. Here are three famous self-portraits. How do you think the artists feel about themselves?

23. Please look at these five works of Art. They all include people. Tell which work of Art you like best? Which one do you like the least? (Why?) (We also asked these questions of the students' teachers privately.)

24. Listen to the following five pieces of music. Which piece did you like the best? Was there one which you disliked? (Why?) (Because copyright restricted the use of current music, we asked for alternative choices.)

25. Three of these four famous works of Art were done by the same artist. One was not. Spot the difference.

26. Do you get your ideas for Art projects from things in the past, the present, or the future? Do you like to draw imaginary things? Do you explore any of these themes in school?

27. Here is an example of a very famous building, what was it used for?

    (a) Was it a place to make laws?
    (b) Was it a tomb for a dead ruler?
    (c) Was it the temple for a statue of a goddess?
    (d) Perhaps it was built for something quite different from these suggestions. Why do you think the Greeks built it?

28. Here are two pieces of music. Describe the difference between the two styles of music.

29. What is the main idea in this work of Art? What is the artist trying to say?

30. When you work on an Art project creating something artistically, do you compare what you are doing with others?

31. When you do an Art project, do you do it in small steps or do you work on the whole project at once?

32. Does your Art work make a statement to others?

French Questionnaire

Questionnaire à l'intention des
étudiants adolescents pour
relever le caractère, les attitudes
et les qualités significatives de
ceux-ci envers les
activités artistiques

1. Quelles activités artistiques préférez-vous?

2. Vous sentez-vous à l'aise lorsque vous prenez part aux activités de danse, de théâtre, de musique et d'art visuel?

3. Aimez-vous une activité artistique si :

   (a) les résultats répondent à vos besoins?

   (b) un adulte aurait pu faire la même chose?

   (c) le professeur d'art considère que ce que vous avez fait est fantastique?

   (d) les autres étudiants pensent que ce que vous avez fait est fantastique?

4. Laquelle des activités mentionnées ci-dessous vous attire le plus?

   (a) les activités artistiques à l'intérieur desquelles je peux comprendre ce qui se passe;

   (b) les activités artistiques qui vous dévoilent comment les personnes se sentent et pensent à propos des choses;

   (c) les activités artistiques qui laissent percevoir des sons et des gestes.

5. Lequel préférez-vous?

   (a) travailler par moi-même sur un projet individuel.

   (b) travailler avec quelques amis sur un projet commun.

   (c) des cours d'art où les étudiants ont à réaliser la même tâche.

6. Aimez-vous

   (a) qu'on vous donne des idées afin que vous sachiez quoi faire lors d'activités artistiques?

   (b) inventer vos propres idées?

7. Pouvez-vous juger vous-même si vous avez bien performé sur un project artistique? ou

   Préférez-vous qu'on vous dise quels seront les critères dont on va se servir pour juger votre travail?

8. Comment vous sentez-vous quand les résultats de vos activités artistiques sont exposés ou interprétés pour les autres?

9. Quand vous avez du temps libre en classe, lesquelles des activités suivantes préférez-vous faire.

(a) dessiner ou peinturer?
(b) jouer un instrument de musique?
(c) écouter la musique?
(d) écrire une pièce de théâtre ou un scénario de film?
(e) danser?
(f) aucunes des activités ci-haut mentionnées. Dites-moi ce que vous préférez. Introduisez vos idées.

10. Etes-vous impliqué dans vos propres activités artistiques en dehors des heures de classe? Si oui, décrivez-les.

11. Avez-vous récemment visité un centre d'art pendant vos heures de classe? Si oui,

    (a) avez-vous écouté un concert de musique professionnel?

    (b) êtes-vous allé voir une pièce de théâtre? ou

    (c) êtes-vous allé visiter une galerie d'art?

12. Comment les artistes font-ils en sorte de créer un monde meilleur?

13. Laquelle(s) des personalités de la télévision admirez-vous et pourquoi?

    Quelles sont leurs caractéristiques que vous croyez être les plus remarquables?

14. Quel genre de situations dramatiques vous plaît le plus? Si vous pourriez participer à l'une d'elles, comme un des comédiens, lequel des rôles choisiriez-vous et pourquoi?

15. Qu'est-ce qui vous fâche? Si vous aviez l'occasion de présenter un point de vue dans une situation où vous aviez la possibilité d'essayer de convaincre les gens de changer leur opinion sur quelque chose, comment vous y feriez-vous?

16. Vers quel domaine artistique croyez-vous que vos parents vous dirigeraient s'ils choisissaient pour vous? Quel domaine pensez-vous que vos amis(es) aimeraient explorer par le biais des arts?

17. Que pensent vos parents des projets d'art que vous faites à l'école?

18. Lequel préférez-vous faire?

    (a) apprendre comment utiliser correctement les différents types de matériels et d'outils; ou

    (b) avoir la permission d'utiliser le matériel artistique à votre gré.

19. Lorsque vous faites quelque chose en art,

    (a) le visualisez-vous avant de commencer? ou

    (b) commencez-vous à travailler et laissez-vous vos idées se developper au fur et à mesure que vous progressez?

20. Avec quelle déclaration êtes-vous d'accord?

    (a) Je ne sais pas quoi écouter mais je pourrais le jouer si je savais.

    (b) Je sais ce que j'aime écouter mais je ne sais pas comment le jouer.

    (c) Je sais ce que j'aime écouter et je sais comment le jouer.

21. Quelle déclaration décrit le mieux comment vous vous sentez?

    (a) Je sais ce que j'aime dramatiser et je sais comment le représenter.

(b) Je sais ce que j'aime dramatiser mais je ne sais pas comment le représenter.

(c) Je ne sais quoi dramatiser mais je pourrais me faire une idée si je savais comment.

22. Voici trois autoportraits célèbres. Comment croyez-vous que les artistes se perçoivent?

23. S'il vous plaît, regardez ces cinq objets d'art. Ils comprennent des personnages. Dites lequel vous préférez. Lequel préférez-vous le moins?

24. Ecoutez les cinq morceaux de musique suivants. Quel morceau préférez-vous le plus? Y en a-t-il un que vous n'avez pas aimé?

25. Trois de ces quatre objets d'art célèbres ont été faits par le même artiste. L'un d'eux ne l'a pas été. Relevez la différence.

26. Prenez-vous vos idées pour des projets d'art à partir des choses du passé, du présent ou du futur? Aimez-vous dessiner des choses imaginaires? Explorez-vous ces thèmes à l'école?

27. Voici une reproduction d'un édifice très célèbre. Quelle était sa fonction?

(a) Etait-ce un édifice législatif (où on passe des lois)?

(b) Etait-ce un tombeau pour un souverain décédé?

(c) Etait-ce un temple pour une statue de déesse?

(d) Le fut peut être construit pour une raison tout à fait différente de celles suggérées. Pourquoi pensez-vous que les Grecs l'ont construit?

28. Voici deux morceaux de musique. Décrivez les différences entre les deux styles de musique.

29. Quelle est l'idée maîtresse dans cet objet d'art? Qu'est-ce que l'artiste a-t-il essayé d'exprimer?

30. Lorsque vous travaillez sur un projet d'art, comparez-vous votre travail avec celui des autres?

31. Lorsque vous faites un projet d'art, le faites-vous par étapes ou de façon globale?

32. Votre travail artistique communique-t-il quelque chose aux autres?

8.0 Data Analysis

8.1 Following a short introductory description of what constituted "Arts activities", students were asked which ones they enjoyed. Drawing was their first choice, music was a close favourite, but in some cases drawing and listening to music simultaneously was important to the students.

8.2 When asked if they enjoyed participating in Arts activities, most adolescents answered affirmatively. Dance and music were important to them. Music was seen by the students as being a passive rather than an active pastime, while dance was the reverse. In a few cases particular dislikes were voiced; these mainly took the form of dislike for participation in an activity if it meant embarrassment when performing for others. One student remarked that mime helped him overcome this awkwardness. Dramatic Arts - specifically developing sound stories - and Craft activities were singled out by some students as favourite occupations.

8.3 "Red herrings" were implanted in the next question. The first two parts asked if the student liked an Arts activity if the results were what was expected and/or "an adult might have done something similar". The next two parts of the same question were deemed to be more significant. The students were asked whether the teacher's or other students' attitudes towards their work was important to them. In almost all cases the answers reflected that other people's opinions were not significant. Typical answers were:

> "I don't really care what other people think...."
>
> "It doesn't really matter to me what other people say...."
>
> "It's important to myself...."

It should be noted that the deaf students constituted the largest group of those who sought teacher and/or peer approval.

8.4 When asked which of the following appealed to them, i.e.,

(a) Arts activities where I can tell what's going on.

(b) Arts activities that show you how people feel and think about things.

(c) Arts activities that have sound and movement.

Students were most definite about their choices. Most could relate to all three - they wanted to be able to understand what was going on. They liked opportunities afforded by the Arts to examine human problems - whether these were part of their own experiences or not. Above all, most students commented on the fact that Arts activities that had sound and movement really appealed to them. In most cases, "activities that had sound and movement" had the connotations of a live concert for the students, in spite of the fact that there were other (unspoken) possibilities.

8.5 The fifth question asked the students to rank

- working alone
- working in a group
- everyone working on the same assignment.

The overwhelming consensus of opinion was that "working by myself on an individual project" took precedence over the other two.

8.6 When asked if they liked to be given ideas about what to do in Arts activities or whether they liked to think up their own ideas, most students followed a middle road. They liked both. They sometimes liked to be given an initial suggestion, provided that they were then allowed to pursue the idea in their own way.

Typical responses were as follows: "I like to get ideas given to me 'cause then I can get started faster," "I like to be given some ideas but not instructions (pause)...I like to think some things myself."

8.7 The next question asked students if they knew how well they had performed on an Arts project, or whether they liked to be told how well they had done by someone else.

There were very few variations on this theme. Most adolescents felt they knew when something was "good". These responses are typical:

- "I know when I've done a good job....It looks complete. It's the way you want it to be."
- "I know when I have done the best that I could...." "It's just a feeling I get when I do good...."
- "I just feel really good."

However, a notable exception to these responses came from the deaf students. They all wanted to be told the teacher's opinion of their work.

8.8 Next, students were asked whether they liked the results of their Arts activities to be displayed or performed for others. For the most part this question received a great many positive responses. However, there were some provisos. Most students had no objections to their (visual) Art work being displayed for others providing that the work met with their own approval, that they had been consulted about displaying it, and

providing that it did not convey "a personal message". Performing for others seemed to be a different matter. This appeared to be an area where many students did not feel very confident and they were therefore reticent about performing for others. Blind students' responses were atypical in this regard.

It is worth noting that the adolescents did not generally seem to associate their participation in the visual arts with personal statements.

8.9 The question which asked about a preferred activity performed during free time in school, proved to be an expansion of the question in which students were asked which Arts activities they enjoyed. However, the participants in the interviews were much more relaxed at this point, and they often chose to elaborate on this theme in a way that they had not been anxious to do at the beginning of the recording session. For example, a visually impaired student described a drawing experience at some length. First she put regular paper over a screen board and

Student:

...you go across it with a crayon and it was really interesting because you could actually make your own pictures, and feel how they turned out, you know... and if you picture in your own mind what it will really look like from an example that you have touched before, it is really interesting.

Interviewer:

How did you feel about your picture? Did you feel that it was a compromise with what you had touched? Or, did you find that you represented it reasonably accurately?

Student:

Well, when I first started I was sort of shy. Well, not shy, but nervous... well ... I was afraid of being embarrassed by what I might do. After, I caught on to the way it is done, and all that; it was pretty easy.

Interviewer:

Can you give an example of something that you touched and then drew - and how it turned out?

Student:

Well, last year...I made a tree. I made a Christmas tree. Now, I've touched many trees,... but putting a tree on paper is different - because, you can... you only have two ways of putting the tree.

Interviewer:

What two ways do you see of putting the tree?

Student:

Well, the branches can only go up or down, or to each side, but they can't come towards you. Because it's on paper.

But when you're touching a real tree you have branches all the way around, so no matter which way you look at the tree it's still going to have branches all over.

Interviewer:

It's a real problem! You can also imagine that you were floating above it, too, and looking down! That would be another way of looking at it!

Student:

(laughing) True! true enough.

Interviewer:

So, how did you find that the tree worked out?

Student:

It worked out great, actually....It worked out all right....You know when they put pictures in books, they sort of put the branches out to each side. I sort of did it that way... a lot of people knew what it was!

Another student said that she would "play a musical instrument, or at least try to play a musical instrument. I usually sit down and pound on the keys if I have the time... or if... I'm sitting in the library I usually read or write a story. I would like to probably write my own script and probably get a lot of people together to do a play. People wouldn't do it here. I have only been here for a year."

Another student remarked that "... in a sense I am not even conscious of it (working on sound compositions)... it's something that I might react to and say "No, no, I don't do that"... yet if I think about it, when the Challenger went down (for example), I was interested, of course, in what had happened, but also I get very interested in the television programming... so if I had free time and that was on, I would probably watch to see how they interview....

Another student spoke at some length about her moods and they way these affected her approach to Arts activities during free time. "... if people around me are - sort of, getting to me, irritating me - playing music (means) being by myself, nobody to disturb me. Nobody to ask questions. I just, sort of, sit and play whatever I like. I go and make all kinds of noise and nonsense with the instrument...."

For another student, outside Arts activities meant that he usually drew "pictures of the characters in my stories,... I like fantasy settings. I play Dungeons and Dragons ....For instance, we have a journal in our English class. We can write down whatever we want to. So what I do is I'll write down legends for the setting of a story. Histories of deities, or the types of people that would inhabit certain parts of the (fantasy) country...." The student was then asked if this kind of activity, involving imaginary characters, was encouraged. He replied, "I am not sure that that part is encouraged. The teacher is not supposed to be able to look at (the journal)....I wouldn't hand in one of those as an assignment."

Deaf students again proved to be atypical. Given free time at school, they would generally choose to dance.

8.10 The tenth question asked whether students were involved with Arts activities outside school. For the most part, the answer was in the affirmative. In addition to drawing and listening to music (this also includes composing sound stories), activities involved social interaction, dancing, and going to concerts. Seldom did any of the students attend professional Arts classes.

8.11 Answers to this question covered a wide range of responses. Students were asked whether they had recently visited an Arts centre during scheduled school time. Some answered "not at all", some had had experiences attending either an Art Gallery, a theatre production, or a live music concert; generally none of the students had visited all three. It appeared that expeditions of any type were relatively rare, and it was even rarer that a student visited one of these centres with an interested parent.

In one of the interviews, the student expanded on an Art gallery visit at some length. It had obviously been a momentous occasion for him - and the fact that this learning experience was so well articulated, it bears quoting at some length.

Interviewer:

Were you surprised by the experience? (visiting an Art gallery)

Student:

I was not exactly surprised, I found it very interesting to find out what the artist said. I thought that artists would use a lot of symbolism. I didn't know what they'd be or how they'd present it. I found it very interesting to find out how they did that.

Interviewer:

Did you ever look at your own stuff after that and say "Hey! I do my own symbols too!"

Student:

No, not really .... Our tour guide brought us to this picture. She explained the symbolism behind this piece.

Interviewer:

Was that concept new to you?

Student:

That concept was a bit new to me. I think I had thought of it before, but .... (pause)

Interviewer:

No one had articulated it to you?

Student:

No....I had thought about it on my own but not very much in depth. So what she did .... She explained how this artist had taken colours to represent the different parts of the self, you see? Mind, body, and spirit - and the blackness around him was closing around him and absorbing him ... especially his spirit, I think. She asked us all how we would represent ourselves in a picture like that. I thought about the way I would represent myself ....

Interviewer:

How did you respond?

Student:

I thought that I would represent myself as several geometric figures, one inside the other, and all equal, like equilateral triangles or equal-sided octagons. One inside the other, going down to a circle - a small circle, and getting progressively lighter from black all the way to a white circle in the centre. I thought about that afterwards. I thought of myself as isolated but thinking that the world is very built up .... I think about these things .... I feel like that world is structured around me - but I don't like that idea, because it makes me feel egotistical.

8.12 In response to "How do artists help to make the world a better place?" the deaf students generally agreed that it was better because of clothes designers. Here are some other students' comments about a world without artists:

"be pretty boring ...."

"would be blah ...."

"would be dull ...
and probably look uglier ...."

"...everything would be plain ...."

(Artists create)

"... beauty ..."

"... pictures on the wall ..."

"... feelings without words ..."

(Artists help)

"... bring back the old culture

"... by painting presidents of long ago...."

All the previous comments are typical responses. The next two are atypical.

"...by giving people stuff to laugh at, or relax to ... or .... Even making them upset by it ... you know ... they can realize that, 'My gosh, that really is how things are.' They can open a lot of eyes ...."

"I don't think people really think about themselves when they look at art. They don't think about themselves unless somebody asks them to think about themselves - at least that's what happens to me...."

8.13 This question asked which television personality the student admired - and why. The following table lists some examples.

TELEVISION PERSONALITY	ADMIRED QUALITY
Magnum P.I.	Works with guns
Simon and Simon	Work with guns
Meryl Streep	Intensity
Rachel Ward (Thorn Birds)	Persistence
David Bowie	Good heart and "he has very nice eyes"
Crockett (Miami Vice) (several times)	Unusual cop
John Ritter (several times)	"He's funny."
Robot-tech	Fantasy - (humans against the aliens)
Bill Cosby (several times)	"He speaks well." "He's funny."
Anne of Green Gables	"the way the people thought"

8.14 "What kind of dramatic situations appeal to you? If you could participate in one, as one of the characters, which role would you choose to play, and why?" Here are some responses.

CHARACTER	REASON
Anne's Mother (Anne of Green Gables)	Crusty - but good hearted
Miami Vice - a criminal	"to be on the show"
Miami Vice - a rich drug pusher	"They drive nice cars."
Cats - a dancer	"any part in that"
Simon and Simon	(no specific reason given)
friends (not T.V. characters)	"the ones who make me laugh"
Detective (program unknown)	"He's a resourceful person"
One of the Dukes of Hazard	"Anything can happen on this show. It's not limited ... there is humour, love, stunts, farce, tragedy .... Nothing is static about the roles ....
Hero Character	force behind the "good guys"; not actually the leader but his aide.

8.15 Answers to the next question fell into two parts. Answers to the first part were divided into two entirely different categories. Part one of the question asked: "What makes you angry?"

Category A:

This group of responses dealt with personal problems. Students wanted to change such things as:

people calling me "a big ox";

making fun of my (blind) eye;

people thinking that I'm "weird" because I have a learning disability;

people making fun of me because of the way I act. I get angry quickly. I lose my cool for sure;

impersonal people;

people who do not pay attention to you;

those who take advantage of power (bullies, some teachers);

not being given the chance to explain something;

some people who have no handicaps - "I really would like it if they'd realize that just because you're handicapped, you're still human. And you can still do things in your own way."

Category B:

This group of responses dealt with universal problems. Students wanted to see the abolition of such things as:

world hunger

racism

the atomic bomb

war

drugs

the death penalty

pollution of parks with waste materials

The second part of the question asked, "If you had the chance to present a point of view in which you were given the opportunity to get people to change their minds about something, how would you do it?" Responses to this part of the question reflected a certain sense of helplessness if it referred back to Category A. However, education (using electronic media) was seen by some as a means by which to effect change.

8.16 When asked what their parents would choose for them to learn in the Arts, most students responded that they had parental approval for whatever they decided to do - particularly if this entailed drawing or playing musical instruments. In some cases, it was reported that parents encouraged a very wide range of experiences.

Students were ambivalent when it came to making suggestions as to what their friends would like to explore through the Arts. The impression given was that they really did not discuss the matter very much, or, as one student said, "Most of us wouldn't admit to (the Arts) being a high priority...." Perhaps this comes closest to the truth.

8.17 The next question asked what parents thought of the art that students made at school. Although there were responses that indicated that parents valued the art that was made at school, there was probably more to suggest that most school art never made it home. Comments that illustrate the latter are as follows:

"I usually keep it to myself."

"I don't really want to show them."

"I just don't bother."

8.18 Students were requested to make a choice in this question between whether they liked to learn how to use various types of materials and tools correctly, or whether they liked to be allowed to use the art materials in their own way.

Almost unanimously, the responses indicated that they wanted to know how to use tools and materials correctly. Having accomplished this, they wanted to be allowed to experiment without restrictions.

8.19 Students invariably answered that when they made something in Art they "saw it" in their mind's eye before they began, although the original concept was often modified as the work progressed. Students expressed the desire to be given time to develop this process.

8.20/21 These two questions received similar responses. Both asked the students, "With which statement do you agree?" Students replied almost unanimously that they "knew what they liked to listen to, but they did not know how to play it" and "they knew what they would like to dramatize, but they did not know how to act."

8.22 The next question was based on of famous self-portraits by Rembrandt, Delacroix, and Van Gogh. The respondents were asked "How do you think the artists feel about themselves?"

None of the students seemed to recognize any of the artists. Generally, they did not seem at all comfortable with this question. They seemed to lack the vocabulary to articulate their answers clearly.

8.23 The next question involved looking at five works of Art. Students were asked to make known which work of Art they liked best and which they liked least.

The following question was asked in conjunction with 8.23. Students were questioned as to which of the same five works of Art they thought their teachers would like best and which least. With few exceptions, students were unable to judge their teachers' taste accurately.

8.24 This question was similar to 8.23, except that students were asked to listen to five pieces of music. They were asked to identify the one that they preferred and any that they disliked.

The adolescents were given the opportunity to give alternate choices if the musical selections were not the kind to which they would elect to listen. Answers to this question were very diverse. Many, though, said that they liked the traditional air "Greensleeves".

8.25 Almost every student correctly recognized the work of Art that was not painted by the same artist from the selection of slides that was shown. It should be noted that all of the paintings were of fantasy themes.

8.26 When asked if inspiration for artistic ideas came from historical, contemporary, futuristic, or imaginary sources, students were generally quick to point out that ideas were conjured up from their own imaginations. "Most of the stuff I draw is imaginary .... I draw things out of my head." However, some students did recognize that their ideas sometimes also came from one or the other of the previously mentioned sources.

8.27 No student recognized the "very famous building" as the Parthenon; few knew its original function. However, what was interesting about this question was the logic employed by a few students to work out the answer. An example follows:

> ".... if it were a place to make laws, I think it would have been in the middle of a city with many other buildings around it and I think it would be more a set of rooms than a set of poles holding up a roof .... If it were a tomb for a dead ruler, I think it would be all closed up. It is very open as if the goddess could walk right out; I imagine that the statue would be very large too ...."

8.28 Only two students recognized the style of the two musical excerpts - and knew them for what they were, namely material available for commercial usage. One of these two students commented that the music sounded as if it were "the theme music for a talk show, just as they're coming on the air or before they're coming back after a news break ...."

8.29 Unlike the problem solving required in 8.25 where most students correctly identified the "odd man out" among the fantasy paintings, few students recognized the "main idea" behind Jan van Eyck's portrayal of the Marriage of the Arnolfini. This painting is full of visual clues which point to the purpose behind the painting. However, the work demanded a certain understanding of the historical context. Although not a painting known for its "disguised symbolism" - rather the contrary - the somewhat obvious nature of its content generally eluded the teenagers.

8.30 Students were evenly divided when it came to answering the question which asked, "When you work on an Art project creating something artistically, do you compare what you are doing with others?" Some said that it really did not matter how anyone else worked on a project, they did it their own way. Others said that they obtained a measure of reassurance from (usually covertly) comparing their work with others. What was implicit in their answers was the fact that there were at least some other students working at the same time on a similar project and that dialogue about the assignments was not a high priority or apparently not much in evidence.

8.31 This question, in part, mirrored a previous one which asked the students whether or not they "saw" a project before they began to work. Most of the students had answered this affirmatively. In this specific question, students were invited to recall the way in which they tackled an Arts project.

"Do you do it in small steps or do you work on the whole project at once?"

Their answers confirmed, in effect, that the idea was conceived as a whole before they worked out the details.

8.32 The last question addressed what was seen to be the potential value which students attached to their own work. They were asked: "Does your Art work make a statement to others?"

In other words, they were asked to consider whether it had a message or whether it was something they considered the expression of a strictly personal experience. The students stated unanimously that they perceived their work as a personal comment.

9.0 Summary of the Findings

9.1 Introduction

This study attempted to identify what exceptional adolescents perceive to be the purposes, concerns, and influences of Arts education, by examining the attitudes, characteristics, and expressive qualities of their art.

Data were also collected which indicated exceptional students' thought processes, work habits, and Arts strategies. The data point to the strong association between

language and the development of visual acuity and the effect of handicaps on the attitudes of other students.

Attention was given to themes which linked school and extracurricular Arts activities, and adolescents' attitudes towards

- recognition of the Arts by peers and knowledgeable adults;
- recognition of the Arts as intellectual activities;
- the merits of learning technical skills and the advantages of freedom to experiment;
- abilities to make self-critical judgements;
- the perception of the Visual and Performing Arts as active processes which involve selecting, classifying, and grouping sometimes disparate parts into coherent wholes.

The findings of this study indicate new directions to explore for a greater understanding of the learning processes of exceptional students.

9.2 The data clearly showed that drawing, music, and/or drawing to music were the preferred Arts activities. The interesting factor which emerged from the data was that these particular preferences were carried through to include free-time and extracurricular Arts activities.

On the surface it might appear that drawing and/or music might be used by students as a diversion or as relaxation. In point of fact, it is more accurate to view these activities as a means by which other - sometimes associated - trains of thought were initiated.

It would also appear that drawing and - usually - listening to music were preferred because they were long-standing and, by implication, self-taught activities. Teachers, it appeared, had had little influence on these modes of communication. However, where a great deal of Arts teaching was evidenced, students chose to experiment with a variety of activities in their spare time at school or extramurally. These situations were the exception rather than the rule.

9.3 According to the data, many students were often not formally taught the Performing Arts, and, in consequence, voiced embarrassment at the thought of performing for others.

9.4 Asked as to whether other people's attitudes towards their Art work were important, most exceptional students' answers stated that this was an insignificant factor. This response may be interpreted in two different ways. On the one hand, one might concede that these are superbly self-confident young people who know exactly what they want to communicate. On the other hand, it might indicate some experiences which have led to lack of confidence and credibility in the Arts evaluation process.

9.5 When asked the question which concerned choices regarding understanding what was "going on", how people felt and thought about things, and Arts activities that had sound and movement, the data clearly show that preference was given to "sound and movement". This phrase was almost invariably interpreted as "live (rock) concert" in spite of possible alternates. There seemed to be a certain amount of hesitation - perhaps lack of practice - when it came to discussing the interpretation of Art forms in which an abstract quality, such as human emotions, was inherent.

9.6 The data overwhelmingly show that the exceptional student prefers to work alone and on an individual project. However, implicit in the data is the fact that it would be more usual for a group of students to work on the same assignment.

What is suggested by the data is the fact that given a situation where students compare notes - even if it is only "to reassure myself that my project is better", working on individual projects must eliminate the possibility of competitiveness. In instructional settings, where many exceptional children need to learn the value of self-reliance and self-esteem, collective projects would not appear to be helpful instructional tools. As to what the data reveal about the merits of students being given ideas instead of thinking up their own, one response speaks for all:

> "I like to be given some ideas but not instructions....I like to think some things myself."

It should also be noted that in conjunction with this notion, the exceptional student needs individualized instruction in the Arts. It is a widely accepted fact that individualized help should be given to exceptional students in areas such as Language Arts or mathematics, and this results in positive changes in behaviour. Therefore, it is logical that individualized instruction should be given in Arts education also.

9.7 Most exceptional students knew when they had performed well on an Arts project. One student said that her work "looked complete" - and "it was the way (she) wanted it to be". Another said that it was a feeling that he had when "I do good...." Only the deaf students wanted to be told by their teachers how well they had performed.

This (evaluation) aspect is a significant outcome of the data. Generally, students do not have the vocabulary to articulate their points of view. Their evaluations are based mainly on an intuitive mode. Intuition has virtues but also weaknesses. There is little evidence in the data of student-teacher dialogue or the teaching of critical thinking and self-criticism. This suggests that teachers of exceptional students are neither comfortable with, nor competent in, evaluating the Arts.

However, students reported that they enjoyed having their (visual) Art work displayed for others - providing that they had been consulted and providing that it was not "too

personal". The data suggests that there was generally no dialogue about work which was about to be displayed. Students were sometimes embarrassed by a fait accompli.

The students were not generally very enthusiastic about performing for others. This was largely caused by lack of experience and confidence because they had little, if any, early educational training in the Performing Arts. It is clear that teachers of the exceptional have not, as a general rule, given a great deal of priority to the teaching of the Performing Arts.

9.8 Students were asked if they had recently visited an Arts centre during scheduled school time. Most replied "rarely". One particularly noteworthy response is transcribed in some detail earlier in the report, because what the student describes is probably a fairly accurate account of a truly aesthetic experience. This Arts encounter had a truly lasting effect on the student and was undoubtedly a very rare occurrence. What is significant is that the data clearly indicate that this would have been a rare happening from any of the participating exceptional students' points of view. Teachers can only ensure that they provide aesthetic experiences for their students if they have experienced aesthetic learning themselves first hand.

9.9 Responses to "How do artists help to make the world a better place?" generally indicated that the artist was seen to perform a decorative role. The conclusion must be drawn that that is how students are taught to think of Arts education - as a diversion, not a dynamic learning tool.

9.10 Two consecutive questions dealt with preferences in professional television or drama. Students voiced enthusiasm for two particular categories: comedy and drama that examined intense human situations.

It should be noted that a later question which investigated whether or not students would know how to act, if they had the opportunity, received generally (but not exclusively) a negative response. They knew what they wanted to dramatize but did not feel competent to perform it.

The data clearly indicate that the Dramatic Arts would be welcomed by exceptional children, particularly if they began to receive instruction in this field before adolescence.

9.11 When asked how they would get people to change their minds about something, students who had had poor experiences with people with negative attitudes towards their handicaps, responded with pathos. It should be noted that in some cases the handicap that caused the student so much concern was invisible to the casual viewer. Other people's attitudes are difficult to change, and this factor was recognized with a great sense of helplessness by the students themselves. This was obviously a situation that was not new to them, and with which they had had a great deal of very negative experience.

It would seem that initiatives are essential to promote public understanding of, and teacher education in, the psychology of handicapped children. One student said it for them all: "I really would like it if they'd realize that just because you're handicapped, you're still human...."

9.12 Parents were generally seen by the students to be supportive of most of their Arts activities, particuarly when the Performing Arts were involved. However, parents did not seem to be consulted nor generally to be notable for guidance in artistic matters. They did not seem to exert a great deal of influence on their offspring's endeavours, nor did it appear that much of the Art work was either discussed or displayed at home, if indeed it made it home.

Attitudes towards Arts activities must begin at home. The evidence suggests that, although students perceive their parents' attitudes as positive, little value seems to be placed on students' school Art, and this usually results in students keeping it to themselves.

9.13 Students were unanimous on two points:

- they would like to learn how to use various types of materials and tools correctly;
- they knew what they liked to listen to, but they did not know how to play it.

Responses to these statements clearly indicate that the exceptional adolescent has not received a great deal of technical instruction in the Visual Arts, nor has he or she had many opportunities to learn how to play a musical instrument.

9.14 Examples of works of Art that were used in this instrument were deliberately chosen to cover a wide span in terms of the history of Western Art. Examples of contemporary North American Art and Native Indian Art were also used. At no time were any of the examples recognized by name. Many of these works of Art are fundamental to our culture and important in terms of giving the exceptional child an opportunity to share a sense of his or her cultural heritage.

Again, this is not something that one "pours into" the reluctant teenager, rather an awareness must be introduced incidentally - and early - and gradually increased.

9.15 Many students experienced problems in articulating their ideas about works of Art.

Concepts such as:

- getting the main idea

- looking for visual clues

- working out logical deductions

- making inferences

- classifying

were strange to them.

This group of exceptional students was also asked to anticipate teacher's tastes in Art. This suggests that artistic likes and dislikes are rarely communicated between teachers and pupils.

9.16 The final question, to which these students responded by stating that they saw their work as personal (not making a statement to others), is effectively a summation of the inquiry.

The overall impression is one of a self-conscious and self-taught group of young people who have not been equipped with the skills and perspectives that they should possess in this important area.

10.0 Conclusions

10.1 All the students reported that they were able to "see" a project in their mind's eye before they began working on it. In other words, they were able to articulate thought processes subsequent to conceptualizing an idea. In a letter to Jacques Hadamard, Albert Einstein discussed the inception of his own ideas and how they appeared to him in several stages. Einstein described the first stage as not involving any words or language. It consisted of clear images. The second stage in the creative process requires an intensive search for conventional words and logical connections.

The creative process, where "creativity" is defined as being the "process of making or bringing into being", is the birthright of everyone. Creativity is not confined to artists; its influence permeates every facet of life and learning. Therefore, the natural function of every teacher in every subject area is to develop every child's potential and nurture his or her ability to employ the creative process.

10.2 Drawing is the primary mode of communication. Data collected in this study support this claim, although listening to music is also an activity in which teenagers frequently engage, both in and outside school. Drawing and/or music often initiate other trains of thought. This suggests two areas that need exploration:

(a) research into how drawing mirrors the exceptional child's thought processes; and

(b) how drawing and music can be utilized in other subject areas to further creative thinking.

10.3 Drawing and listening to music were preferred activities where there was minimal evidence of instruction in other areas of the Arts. Notable exceptions to this are found in the interviews with the blind students. In these cases, the data reveal educational histories of multifaceted Arts experience. A greater degree of self-expression through the Arts is evident in their statements.

10.4 Evaluation techniques need to be clarified for both the teachers and exceptional students. Lack of a common vocabulary and a shared structure on which to base the evaluative process causes misunderstandings in this area.

10.5 The exceptional student generally did not support the idea of group Arts projects or even being given the same assignment as others. All preferred individual assignments. Self-assurance and self-esteem is better served if initially the teacher adopts this approach and offers ideas.

10.6 Most exceptional students were not enthusiastic about performing for others because most of them had received little or no training in this area. Many expressed a strong interest in learning to play a musical instrument or learning to act. A void in early Arts training for these students points to a void in teaching, and by implication to a lack of teacher training in the Arts.

10.7 Gardner, Winner, and Kircher in their paper "Children's Conceptions of the Arts" state that:

> It is not known,... whether most children are bored, superficially entertained, or deeply affected by "cultural" exposures (in museums).

This study revealed that many of the exceptional students who contributed to this research had visited at least one museum a year, and one student had been "deeply affected" by the experience because of the nature of the guidance provided during the visit.

This suggests that teachers themselves must have a deep awareness of the meaning of an aesthetic experience before it is possible to be communicated to their students.

10.8 The content of current Arts programs does not seem to meet the needs of most exceptional students. The root of this problem is that the Arts are not seen by administrators, teachers, students, or parents as having anything to do with the rest of the curriculum. When "learning" and "creativity" are understood in their truest sense, and when the Arts

are seen to enhance every facet of education, then changes will occur. At present, the students' perceptions of Arts subject matter are that it has value for the individual in terms of personal satisfaction. Arts activities do not currently appear to provide avenues by which students are able to construct and understand their own realities.

11.0 Recommendations

11.1 Teachers of exceptional students should promote learning and creativity through the Arts. The Ministry of Education and individual school boards should provide leadership in this field by promoting Arts Education.

11.2 Instruction in the methods used for teaching the Arts to the visually impaired have implications for all exceptional students and should be included in the training of all Special Education teachers.

11.3 Research should be undertaken on the Arts and their relationship to the hearing handicapped. The association between language development and the conceptualization of thought processes, as seen through the drawings of deaf students, should be addressed. Studies in this field which employ questionnaires as research instruments should use a specially written computer program with multiple-choice answers.

11.4 Widespread use of an audio/visual questionnaire similar to the one used in this research would be helpful to those involved with (Arts) education in correctional centres because:

(a) transcriptions of the responses often revealed areas where there are immediate and personal problems;

(b) transcriptions of the responses revealed unfulfilled Arts ideas and dreams. Accentuating the positive aspect of this information would be pragmatically and economically advantageous.

11.5 Special Education teacher-training in the Arts should include instruction in the following:

(a) the use of the Arts as media for expressing cognitive processes;

(b) the correct use of Arts (music, drama, and visual arts) tools and media;

(c) Arts vocabulary and evaluation techniques;

(d) an overview of teaching:
- self-criticism
- critical thinking
- the meaning of aesthetic experience

(e) - a survey Art History course which includes a history of Western and Eastern ideas;
- the development of Canadian Art History;
- an overview of Native Peoples' Art and History;
- the place of folk art in contemporary society.

Respectfully submitted,

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